

## DUXBURY RURAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY: SOME SIGNIFICANT DATES

(Excerpts from the Clerk's minutes)

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| November 14, 1883 | Founding and first meeting of the "Rural Society" at the house of Rev. Burr -- "for the purpose of improving and ornamenting the streets of the town by the use of such means as the Society deems best for that purpose."   |
| August 8, 1888    | President Jacob's five-year report mentions "expenditure of \$513.09 for the setting out of trees at about 240 places, 27 street lamps, construction of a fence along the old cemetery, planting of vines and flowers there and in other parts of town, collection of \$25 for a pump, the starting of a nursery on land of Laurence Bradford, and an attempt to disturb Myles Standish." Membership noted at a record level of 60 people. |
| August 5, 1891    | President F. B. Knapp's annual report spoke of the need to have a full-time forester. Also mentioned was the possibility of forming a Town Forest at Round Pond, with carriage roads.  |
| February 19, 1916 | Incorporation of Duxbury Rural Society, Inc. "to accept, purchase, lease, or otherwise acquire real estate or any interest therein and hold same in trust for the use and enjoyment of the public, subject to such regulations as are deemed necessary for the fullest carrying out of this project."  |
| October 11, 1916  | Deed to Duxbury Rural Society, Inc., from Mrs. Charles Ripley, granddaughter of Charles Drew, of Union Store, to be used for historical purposes, plus a gift of \$2,000.  |
| May 24, 1930      | Voted: to install signs to indicate "No Dumping" on the marshlands of the Society.   |
| November 17, 1936 | Change of name to Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, Inc.   |
| November 6, 1965  | Deed to King Caesar House. Property of 1.27 acres, cottage, barn, and house for \$70,000.  |
| August 12, 1968   | Bradford House (built in 1808) donated by Gershon and Edward Bradford with 9.76 acres at the corner of Harrison and Tremont Streets.   |
| July 8, 1969      | Clark's Island gift, including 17 acres with 1500 feet of shoreline, the historic Pilgrim Rock, Watson Cemetery, a dwelling house, and two other buildings, plus an endowment fund, from the Trustees of Pilgrim Rock Foundation under the will of Sarah Wingate Taylor.   |

## A MESSAGE TO MEMBERS, DUXBURY RURAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

This pamphlet has been sent to you for your information and for future reference. More directly, however, it is hoped that you will find it both timely and useful at the Town Meeting in March, when the Duxbury Conservation Commission will present a land acquisition program. The project is as vital to the future of the town as our own Society's "rural" program of the past is to the Duxbury we know today.

Included in this brochure is a statement from the Chairman of the Conservation Commission, Dr. Lansing H. Bennett, and a commentary on the work of the Society over the years by our town historian, Mrs. Dorothy Wentworth. A map of the Town also has been inserted to show the Society's principal land holdings in relation to the other publicly-owned lands of the Town.

In the 87 year history of our Society, much conservation has been accomplished. To date, 37 individual parcels of land totalling 143 acres, with a number of historical buildings thereon, have been acquired.

In considering the land alone for its role in providing the town with permanently open space, six basic groupings of property emerge:

1. almost 51 acres surrounding Round Pond off Mayflower Street, acquired gradually in the years following 1891, when the Society's minutes mentioned a discussion of the need for a long range forestry plan;
2. approximately eight acres of salt marsh along the north shore of the Bluefish River, acquired by gift and purchase, dating back to the early 1900's. (The removal of a number of unsightly buildings and the preservation of the view was a major part of this program);
3. more than 37 acres at Tremont and Depot Streets, most of which were purchased in 1931, known as the Lapham Woodlot;
4. a 1963 gift from the Estate of Marietta Russell of eight and one-half acres, with a 600 foot frontage on Island Creek Pond, currently being maintained as a bird sanctuary in accordance with the wishes of the donor;
5. nearly 10 acres at the corner of Harrison and Tremont Streets by a 1968 gift of Gershon and Edward Bradford; and
6. a shoreline frontage of 1500 feet on Clark's Island in Plymouth, with 17 acres of upland by a gift under the will of Sarah Wingate Taylor.

Our Society is committed to continue the high standard set in the past. We must acquire more land in the years to come so that the townspeople of tomorrow will still be able to enjoy much of what we cherish today. In keeping with this aim, our own support of the programs of the Conservation Commission assumes major importance. These two efforts, while different in method, in reality go hand in hand.

JOHN D. NASH, CHAIRMAN, LANDS COMMITTEE; Feb. 16, 1970

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## DUXBURY TODAY -- THE VISION OF YESTERDAY

Conservation is a topic of national interest that happens to be of immediate concern in Duxbury. It is not, however, a totally new-found project, for all it may seem so to this generation. In Duxbury, for example, if you go back to the records of the Rural and Historical Society, you will note that conservation was of consuming interest a century ago, and in the 1800's, they did something about it.

All too often, historical societies consist of sedate, elderly staid quakers, but most of the charter members of the Duxbury Historical Society were in their 30's when they met at the home of the Unitarian minister, the Rev. Rushton Dashwood Burr, to organize in 1883. With a clergyman, a schoolmaster, housewives, businessmen, and only three maiden ladies, they were as representative a group as could be mustered today.

This small group of concerned citizens started out in a modest way, calling themselves a "rural society" with the purpose of "improving and ornamenting the streets of the town." In the next five years, they set out more than 300 trees; provided street lamps for the Main Street from the Village to Powder Point; bought watering troughs (a humane necessity then); constructed a fence along the neglected Burying Ground on Chestnut Street; planted vines and flowers; and started a nursery, to name only some of their achievements. Not a bad record for a small, new society.

What became of their work? Well, the trees are still with us, the kerosene street lamps gave way to electricity, the fence at the Standish Burying Ground is now town-maintained and its construction and accompanying cleanup project saved an historic spot, and the nursery idea was taken over by the town tree department which, incidentally, the Society later sponsored in town meeting. By 1888, membership had grown to 60.

Shortly after this, the Society began to acquire land for the purpose of protecting historic places, beautifying the roadsides, and establishing wooded areas where citizens could enjoy nature. They obtained by gift marshland along Bluefish River and bought acres around Round Pond, off Mayflower Street. They were not incorporated, so a committee of members called the Trustees of Common Lands (of the Society) had to hold title to the lands which were conveyed to the Society when it was incorporated in 1916. The good of the town was always in mind.

More land was obtained but perhaps the most farsighted acquisition was the forest area around Round Pond. The aim was practically a Green Belt blueprint, a forerunner of today's conservation projects. The people of Duxbury owe a tremendous debt to the Rural Society of 1883, which silently and quietly has done much for the town over the years.

Start with Tremont Street, along by the Old Town Hall and the Unitarian Church. Note the wooded corner lots across the street, on both corners of Depot Street, enhancing the setting of these buildings. The Duxbury Rural and Historical Society owns those lots and has long-standing restrictions on them so no unsightly filling station or hot dog stand ever will spoil the lovely area or mar the approach to the historic old buildings. Next, think of the Standish Burying Ground on Chestnut Street. It was such a neglected, overgrown, rundown tangle that there was a considerable argument as to what it was all about. The Society

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hired a man to mow, clean up the brush, straighten stones, and put up a fence. Since then, the town has continued the care of the area. Then, in 1938, the Society obtained title to the lot adjacent to the Burying Ground, on the east, the site of the Second Meeting House, built in 1707 and used until 1785 when the parish moved up to Tremont Street. This lot was a tangle and was threatened by a possible commercial venture, which would have been unfortunate next to the historic old place.

Note the cleared areas by the bridge at Bluefish River, with rail fences and nice landscaping. This was an area of old buildings, stores in neglect, and general delapidation. The Society already owned the Drew House, and it soon acquired all other land between the bridge and that house, except one house and lot on the east and the Cable House on the west. Unsightly buildings were moved off, bulkheads were made to ease the tide damage, grass was sown, flowers planted (work done by cooperating garden clubs) and benches added. The old watering trough was given a resting place here, and beauty was added to the Bluefish area.

Then, along the Bluefish River, along St. George Street, and along Powder Point, marshland was acquired and restrictions implemented to prevent the dumping that was making it an eyesore, and the construction of buildings that would destroy the sea view. Other marsh owners went along with the idea and put similar restrictions on their marshes until, today, all the way round to the King Caesar Wharf is a place of beauty. The Wharf itself was a gift, and the purchase of the King Caesar House is well known. All of this was accomplished by the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society without any fanfare, just the quiet work of civic minded people, while no one else, perhaps, was ready to listen or act.

Along Mayflower Street, past the dump, look at the town forest on the right, marked by a boulder with a legend. This town-owned forest, recently added to, was the brainchild of Mr. Frederick Knapp, abetted by the Rural Society of which he was a charter member. It now is called Knapp Forest, and the winding route of the street follows the same path families from Pembroke, then part of Duxbury, trod as they came to the old meeting house on Chestnut Street. It has not changed.

Across the street from the town forest, and in from the road, is the Round Pond area the Society first selected for conservation. Bit by bit a good deal of land was obtained almost all the way around the pond, with the intention of making a carriage road. The Society then acquired considerable acreage where East Street joins Mayflower, a big area, that will do much to keep a large section of Duxbury green and natural. The town owns some adjacent land, so it is a good start towards a Green Belt.

Drive along the street and ponder the work of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society in these and other areas too numerous to detail. The work begun by that small gathering in 1883 has gone on ever since and continued into our own day with the King Caesar House, the Bradford House, and Clark's Island. The Society stands ready to cooperate with the Town Conservation Commission, applauding its efforts, sharing members, and giving support and encouragement to those who now carry on the conservation and Green Belt projects which tie in with the early aims and intents of other Duxbury citizens. It is well to recognize what has been done -- and then go on to what must be done.

JOSEPH WENTWORTH, TOWN HISTORIAN



## CONSERVATION: A PRIVATE AND PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

The Town of Duxbury, regrettably, has been slow to realize that the natural features which it has taken for granted for these 300 years are rapidly slipping away. The public effort to conserve land has been woefully inadequate and amounts to a mere 0.7% of the entire town. The private sector, particularly the Rural and Historical Society, has fortunately been active and at present conserves slightly more land than the town.

There are many reasons why Duxbury has been slow to waken to the need to conserve land. Perhaps the apparent vastness of the bay and the marsh, the acres of bogs and reservoir, or the numerous wooded areas have supported the notion that nothing is ever going to change and Duxbury will remain the same forever.

Nothing could be further from the hard fact that at the present rate of growth, Duxbury's buildable upland will be used up in 20 years. The town will be filled.

Open space is not something you think about too much, until you don't have any left. The loss of a few acres of salt marsh may not seem to be important until there is no more marsh. The quality of our environment is declining and all we are doing is talking about it.

A more vigorous approach is necessary if we expect to keep Duxbury the unique rural-coastal community we like to think it is. We must conserve land; all kinds of land: coastal wetland, agricultural land, marshes and swamps, stretches of upland -- the things that make our town so much better than any other.

The ways to accomplish this are numerous. Private organizations such as the Rural and Historical Society qualify as charities and, as such offer significant tax advantages to persons wishing to donate land. The private sector is free of the obligations imposed by Federal and State agencies on lands purchased with their funds. Private conservation land trusts are becoming common devices to set land aside and are subject only to the specific instructions of the donor. Private neighborhood organizations offer the best method of educating abutters to the advantages of conservation easements or restrictions on their properties. Common land in cluster zones are best placed under the care of the abutters who have a definite stake in the proper maintenance of these lands.

Large acquisitions are perhaps best framed and negotiated by the public body through its Conservation Commissions, Recreation Commissions, and the like.

Whatever the method, it is evident that it is up to the residents of Duxbury to conserve their town. Nobody is going to do it for them. Time is running out, and when the land is gone, it will never be returned to its natural state.

It will cost some money, but we ask: "What will it cost financially and environmentally if it isn't done?"  
LANSING H. BENNETT, CHAIRMAN, CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## OTHER MEMORABLE DATES

(More excerpts from the Clerk's minutes)

- 1830 Installation of Town Square flagpole opposite the Cable House.
- April 7, 1884 Voted: that a committee of three be appointed to call upon persons living on the Main Street to ascertain if street lamps are placed in front of their residences, whether they will keep same in order and lighted for two years. (Later appropriated \$75 for 27 lamps covering the area from the Village to the Point.)
- December 17, 1886 Committee on lamps reported that the lamp in front of Edmund Winslow's was not lighted and that one of the other lamps has been partially destroyed by explosion.  
Voted: that a boy be paid 25 cents per month to light the lamp on the flagpole near the Cable Office, provided it be kept in condition for trimming and lighting and be furnished with oil.
- May 18, 1889 Mention at meeting of unearthing Standish skeleton at Old Burial Ground on Chestnut Street.
- November 2, 1907 Meeting with informal talk on the great need for a public dump, and hope was expressed that the Town would do something about it in the spring.
- August 9, 1916 First meeting of Duxbury Rural Society, Inc.  
Reports: 1. A. P. Lucas in charge of opening tide gates once a week over one tide to keep the mill pond clean for the bathing for the sum of \$10 yearly.  
2. Watering trough at South Duxbury in good order. One at Powder Point off base. Edin Soule's ice cart ran into it when the horses were in a hurry for a drink.  
3. Tent Caterpillar committee reported prizes totalling \$8.50 had been given to the school children for gathering egg clusters.
- September 11, 1919 Voted to petition the Selectmen to relocate watering trough and flagpole, their present positions being dangerous to careless automobile drivers.
- October 18, 1919 Voted \$5 for "Lands Committee" to improve Millbrook Triangle.
- August 10, 1921 Vote concerning opening of tide gates, with consideration to the needs of salt hay makers.



# PRINCIPAL LAND HOLDINGS, FEBRUARY 1970 <sup>4/5</sup>

## Town of Duxbury and Duxbury Rural & Historical Society, Inc.





